

South Precinct Email Community Newsletter
October 14, 2008



Dear Community Friends,

Recent Crime Trends

This newsletter addresses recent property crimes that have been noted in the South Precinct area.

Car Prowls

We are seeing an upward trend in the number of car prowls in the South Precinct area. They seem to be up in almost every neighborhood – Beacon Hill, Georgetown, Rainier Beach, along Lake Washington, along the commercial corridors of the Precinct.... Most common items taken include backpacks, cell phones, GPS navigation systems, credit cards, cash, and iPods.

For some time we've advised members of the community that Car Prowl is one of the most pervasive property crimes in our region. It is also one of the most preventable: don't leave items of value in your car. The number of backpacks, laptops digital cameras and iPods that are being left in – and then stolen from – cars, let's us know that we need to do more to reinforce this message.

Car prowling, like most crime, is a crime of opportunity. If you remove the opportunity, you remove the crime. Removing items of value from our vehicles reduces the opportunity. Part of the response to these crimes is we as car owners doing our part. When we as car owners stop leaving our property in our unattended cars, we have less incidents of car prowling.

We are not blaming the victim. At the same time, we are saying that we need not feed the problem by leaving valuables in our vehicles in plain sight to lure potential prowlers. Let's not make it easy for these criminals. We should do our part to reduce the opportunity for these crimes to occur. We do *that* by removing items of value from our car.

Burglaries

We saw an increase in residential burglaries over the warm weather months. This is not unusual. We often see a spike in the number of burglaries via unlocked /open windows during the summer because we tend to leave windows open for ventilation and then leave the home. As the weather has cooled, the number of burglaries has decreased.

Recently, we've noted several incidents of burglars using ladders to gain entry to unlocked second story windows. The burglars are using ladders that have been left unsecured by neighbors. An example: Mr. Jenkins had a ladder lying in his driveway, but it wasn't locked up. Burglars took the ladder and put it up against Mrs. Johnson's house and got in a second floor bedroom window. After they got what they wanted, they went to Mr. Santos' place and went in a second story window there.

What You Can do

- Close and lock all doors and windows (even second story windows) when you are away from home.
- Please secure all tools - including ladders - to ensure they cannot be used to gain entry into your (or someone else's) home. Use a chain and padlock to secure the ladders (not just to themselves); secure them to a post/railing/banister, etc.
- Engrave your valuables with your driver's license number so that it can be identified in the event of theft. Engraving property is also a deterrent; if thieves see the property is engraved, they are less likely to take it. For those items you cannot engrave, take a photo so you can positively identify them. This includes GPS systems, iPods, digital cameras, etc.; not just TVs, DVRs and laptops.
- Whether you engrave the item or take a picture of it, record the serial number of the item for positive identification. Make an inventory list of your valuable items; keep it someplace secure.
- Do not leave valuables in your unattended vehicles.
- Report the crimes! We often hear that car prowls are no big deal. However, theft from a car is still a theft. Police need to know about the thefts and need to be alerted when neighbors see suspicious activity. Without that reporting, police cannot respond.

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe! Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator